

**REMARKS**

Claims 2, 3 and 7-9 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, claims 1 and 10-12 are cancelled. Reconsideration of the present application based on the above amendment and following remarks is respectfully requested.

Applicants thank the Examiner for the indication that claims 2, 3 and 7-9 contain allowable subject matter and would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the features of the base claim and any intervening claim.

Entry of the Amendment is proper under 37 C.F.R. §1.116 since the Amendment: (a) places the application in condition for allowance for the reasons discussed herein; (b) does not raise any new issues requiring further search and/or consideration since the Amendment amplifies issues previously discussed throughout prosecution; (c) does not present any additional claims; and (d) places the application in better form for appeal, should an appeal be necessary. The Amendment is necessary and was not earlier presented because it is made in response to arguments raised in the Final Rejection. Thus, entry of the Amendment is respectfully requested.

**I. The Claims Satisfy All Formal Requirements**

Claim 11 has been objected to as lacking proper antecedent basis. Claim 11 has been cancelled. Accordingly, withdrawal of the objection is respectfully requested.

**II. The Claims Define Allowable Subject Matter**

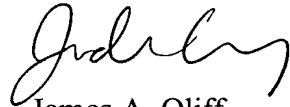
As discussed above, the Office Action indicates that claim 2 contains allowable subject matter. Accordingly, claim 2 has been amended to incorporate the features of base claim 1. Thus, claim 2 is in condition for allowance. Furthermore, claims 3 and 7-9, which depend from claim 2, are likewise in condition for allowance for at least the reasons discussed above, as well as for the additional features that they recite.

**III. Conclusion**

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of the claims are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



James A. Oliff  
Registration No. 27,075

Jude L. Cooney  
Registration No. 54,045

JAO:JLC/cmf

Date: March 25, 2004

**OLIFF & BERRIDGE, PLC**  
**P.O. Box 19928**  
**Alexandria, Virginia 22320**  
**Telephone: (703) 836-6400**

DEPOSIT ACCOUNT USE AUTHORIZATION Please grant any extension necessary for entry; Charge any fee due to our Deposit Account No. 15-0461
--